



**Maryland Department of Health (MDH) Public Health Administration (M00F)**  
**Fiscal Year 2024 Operating Budget**  
**Response to Department of Legislative Services Analysis**

**Senate Budget and Taxation Committee**  
**Health and Human Services Subcommittee**  
**Senator Cory McCray**  
**February 17, 2023**

**House Appropriations Committee**  
**Health and Social Services Subcommittee**  
**Delegate Kirill Reznik**  
**February 15, 2023**

The Department thanks the Governor, the Department of Budget and Management, and the Budget Committees for their support. We thank the Department of Legislative Services for its insightful budget analysis.

**PHA should discuss the functions of the remaining 12.3 decrease of contractual FTEs and why these FTEs are eliminated in the fiscal 2024 allowance. (pg. 7)**

**MDH Response:** The federal Overdose Data to Action Grant (OD2A) ends August 31, 2023. The grant included funding for 21 contractual FTEs. Those positions are only partially funded in the FY 2024 allowance. The Notice of Funding Opportunity for the OD2A successor grant is expected to be released in March. These positions and their functions will likely continue on that grant if the Department is awarded funding.

**MDH should comment on plans to spend the remaining funding [\$525,000 in FY 23 for OCME recruitment and retention efforts]. (pg. 12)**

**MDH Response:** The Department is working with the OCME and the Post Mortem Examiners Commission on a proposal for additional support to medical examiners.

**The Department of Legislative Services (DLS) recommends the release of the \$500,000 in general funds restricted pending the submission of this report and will process a letter to this effect if no objections are raised by the subcommittees. (pg. 13)**

**MDH Response:** The Department concurs.

**OCME should comment on plans to pursue any of the efforts identified in this JCR submission [regarding UMSOM partnership]. (pg. 13)**

**MDH Response:** The Interim Chief Medical Examiner has reached out to the Designated

Institutional Official and Associate Designated Institutional Official of the University of Maryland Office of Graduate Medical Education inquiring about collaboration opportunities related to the OCME's Forensic Pathology Fellowship Program. As additional pathologists are hired into the office, the ability to provide more educational opportunities for medical students and residents will also improve.

**DLS recommends adopting committee narrative requesting a report on the office's accreditation status and autopsy backlog. (pg. 14)**

**MDH Response:** The Department concurs. As of February 9, 2023, there is no autopsy backlog.

**Therefore, DLS recommends adding language to restrict funds pending submission of this report [on the staffing challenges faced by the State and LHDs]. (pg. 15)**

**MDH Response:** The Department concurs, but requests a due date of December 15, 2023.

**DLS requests that MDH comment on the timeline for the [Public Health Services Data Modernization] project and its main objectives, functions, and users of an upgraded data system. DLS recommends committee narrative requesting additional information on this project. (pg. 15)**

**MDH Response:** The Department concurs with the DLS recommendation.

The data systems that support public health services are outdated, brittle, and siloed. These data systems are not able to provide the data needed for effective public health practice and decision making. MDH assessed its 84 public health data systems and prioritized a list of systems that are in need of modernization. Next steps (such as whether to upgrade, migrate to the cloud, re-architect) for those systems are currently being determined. In addition to modernizing existing systems, new infrastructure is being developed (for instance, a data lake that allows greater access to and appropriate sharing of public health data across public health programs and with the public). Professional development opportunities are also being identified, so that the public health workforce has the data and informatics skills to work in a modern data environment.

In brief, the Public Health Services (PHS) Data Modernization Initiative (DMI) was launched in 2022 to address the urgent need for data and data system modernization across the diversity of public health programs in PHS. The PHS DMI has four overarching goals: 1) be deliberate and strategic with modernization efforts, 2) modernize the public health data systems, 3) modernize the PHS data and informatics workforce, 4) align modernization activities with MDH re-accreditation standards and measures. The ultimate goal of the PHS DMI is that all Maryland residents are able to achieve better health because timely and complete trusted data are used to inform public health practice.

For more information, please see the attachment, which outlines our current thinking on DMI, and we welcome further conversations on this subject.



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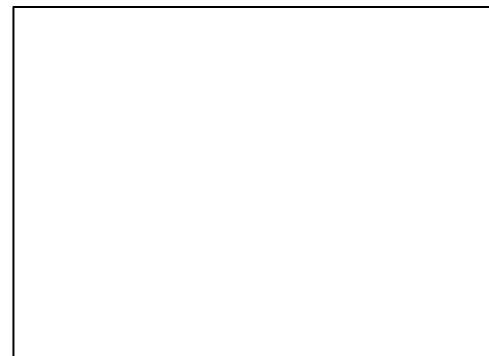


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